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Key Chinese Scientist

Tsien Hsue-shen

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IT is an irony of cold war history that the man believed responsible for putting Communist China's first atomic bomb on the nose of a missile was trained, nurtured, encouraged, lionized, paid and trusted for 15 years in the United States.

Then, in the five years between 1950 and 1955, the Government

Man in the News Tsien Hsue-shen, arrested him as an alien Communist, tried to deport him, changed its mind and held him here against his will, and finally let him return to his native China.

Dr. Tsien, who is 57 years old, pronounces his name tehce-EN Shoe-AY.

Dr. Tsien stoutly maintained to the end that he never was a Communist. The Government charged he had become one before he came to the United States in 1935 as a graduate student in mechanical engineering, in one of the many Immigration Department hearings held in his case, two Los Angeles Police Department detectives testified that he had joined the party in 1939.

Before those troubles began, Dr. Tsien had been so trusted by the United States that he was made director of the rocket section of the United States National Defense Scientific Advisory Board. The chief of the board was Gen. Henry H. Arnold of the Air Force.

Mission to Germany

Toward the close of World War II, Dr. Tsien was given the rank of an Air Force colonel and made head of a mission of scientists sent to scout out the progress made in missileery by the Germans.

Later he was one of a group of scientific braintrusts assigned to predict how the next war would be fought in the air. Their report, called "Toward New Horizons," was the basis of much of America's later military developments and Dr. Tsien's contributions were major.

One chapter discussed the use of atomic fuels as aerial propellants. Another was on the use of solid fuels in rockets.

"Brilliant," "hard-working," "high personal capability"—these were assessments made of this Chinese scientist by his colleagues. But during the years he lived and work on the campus of the California Institute of Technology he was not easy to know.

Relatively Humorous

Dr. Tsien, Joe Stewart one of his long-time col-



U.S. training at the service of Red China.

leagues and sponsors there, described him as "relatively humorless." Dr. Stewart recalled that Dr. Tsien rarely visited the homes of the other professors who taught at that great center of science. Though they were colleagues 15 years, and worked on terms of intimacy, Dr. Tsien never invited Dr. Stewart to his home.

His one known outside interest was classical music; he was a frequent concert-goer. His wife, a Chinese whom he married in the United States in 1947, has been teaching at a conservatory of music since their return to China. They have two children.

Born in Shanghai on Sept. 2, 1909, Dr. Tsien was an undergraduate at Chiao Tung University there and proved so promising that he was given a scholarship to study in America when he graduated in 1934. He went to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he won a master's degree in 1936, and then transferred to Cal Tech. There, after three years, he was awarded a doctor's degree.

Years of teaching and re-

search at Cal Tech followed. He took part in the first Government-sponsored rocket research there and in 1943 was named an associate professor and chief research analyst in the jet propulsion laboratory headed by Dr. Stewart.

Much of the research work he participated in was secret and was commissioned by the Navy, but the Government said later that none of his work after 1947 was regarded as secret.

In 1946 Dr. Tsien returned to China and was offered the presidency of his alma mater, but the Minister of Education thought a man of 36 was too young for the post and refused to approve the appointment.

Dr. Tsien then went back to Cal Tech to resume his work there. He subsequently was named Goddard Professor of Jet Propulsion.

The first hint any of his colleagues had of impending trouble came in 1950, when Government agents sized 1,800 pounds of papers and books on rocketry and space physics he was intending to ship to Hong Kong. It was charged that the papers contained information valuable to the United States and that the true destination was Shanghai.

Long Deportation Effort

Later, the Government announced that there was nothing secret in the papers. But the effort to deport him dragged on for several years and ended in another irony. After he was sentenced to be deported as a Communist, the Government held up execution of the deportation on the ground that Dr. Tsien possessed so much knowledge of potential value to an enemy that it would be "inimical to the best interests of the United States" to let him leave.

That judgment seems to have been justified by time. On his return to China Dr. Tsien was named to the Academy of Sciences and immediately put to work on developing weaponry. A year later it was announced that he had joined the Communist party.

Since disappearing behind the modern Great Wall China has erected around her borders, Dr. Tsien is not known to have had any contacts with Western scientists, although infrequent reports mention his name in connection with missions to Moscow.

Perhaps the best clue to his standing now with the rulers of China is a photograph that circulated here a few years ago. It showed Dr. Tsien dressed in a military uniform without any insignia and seated at a plain wooden table. Seated beside him, and was Mao Tse-tung.

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